

THE HOLY EUCHARIST



SACRAMENT IN PICTURES SERIES

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The Holy Eucharist is a sacrifice and a Sacrament. It is the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Blessed Lord, under the appearance of bread and wine.

Our Lord is offered as a sacrifice in the Mass. He is given to us as divine food in Holy Communion.

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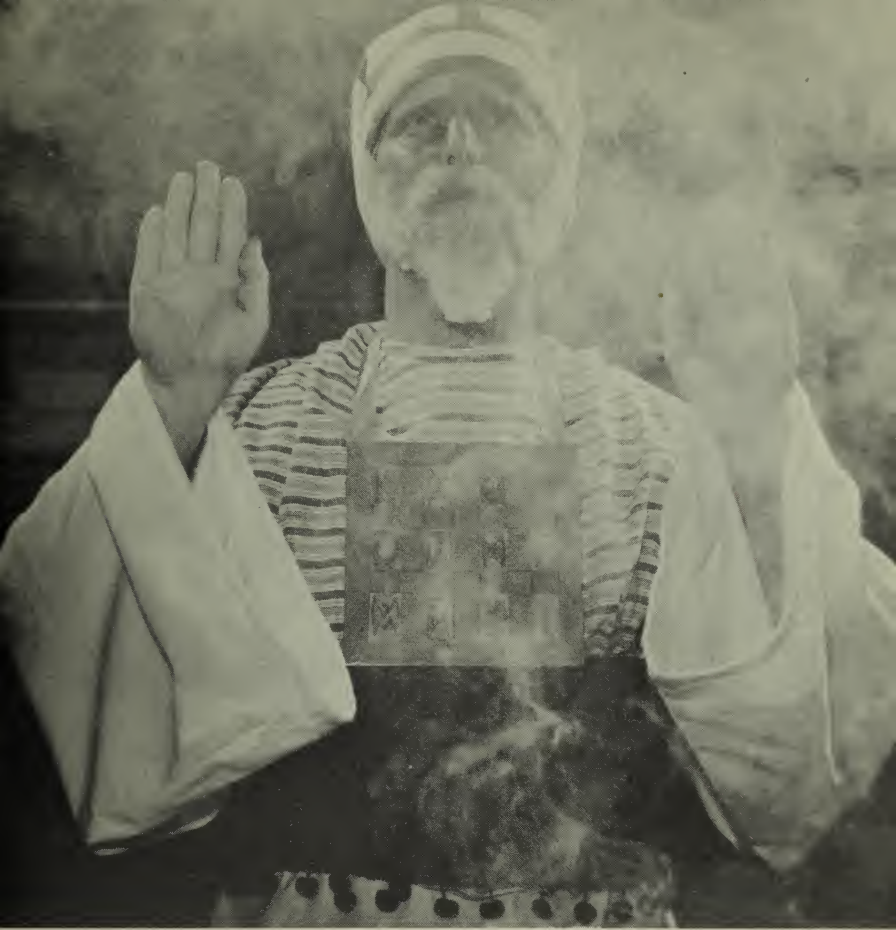
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A soldier makes the "great sacrifice" when he offers his life for his country. A religious sacrifice is a special act of worship in which a creature is offered to God. Only twice did God order sacrifice. The first time He ordered the sacrifices of the Old Testament from the Jews. The other time, He sent His only-begotten Son to be a Sacrifice for all men, the Sacrifice of the Cross and the Mass.



For a religious sacrifice four things are required: 1. An object or victim; 2. The change or destruction of the victim; 3. A suitable holy place, or altar; 4. A priest. Since this gift is an offering to God, the victim should be most noble. The most noble creature is man. The Israelites sacrificed animals. Christ, the Son of God, Who sacrificed Himself, offered the perfect sacrifice.



Since the offering of the victim acknowledges God's complete power over man, the victim is changed or destroyed. If the sacrifice was unbloody, like wine, the wine was poured out. If an animal was offered, it was slain, its blood sprinkled on the altar and the creature burned. Thus, the gift or offering was completely consumed so that it could never be used for anything else.



God alone chooses the men who will offer sacrifice to Him. Such a "chosen" man is called a priest. Among the Jews, He chose His priests from the tribe of Levi. In Christian times, there is ONE priest, Jesus Christ. A Catholic priest simply shares in the priesthood of Christ. He acts in the name of Christ.



For such a solemn act as a sacrifice, there should be a special, sanctified place. This is called an altar. God gave the plan for His altar among the chosen people, the Jews. It was established in one place for one people. The new altar for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is found wherever there is a priest of the Catholic Church.



The sacrifices of the Old Law foreshadowed the great Sacrifice that Jesus Christ was to make. God tested Abraham's obedience by asking him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Abraham prepared to do what God asked, but an angel was sent to stay his hand. As a reward for his complete obedience to the will of God, Abraham was made the Father of the Chosen People.



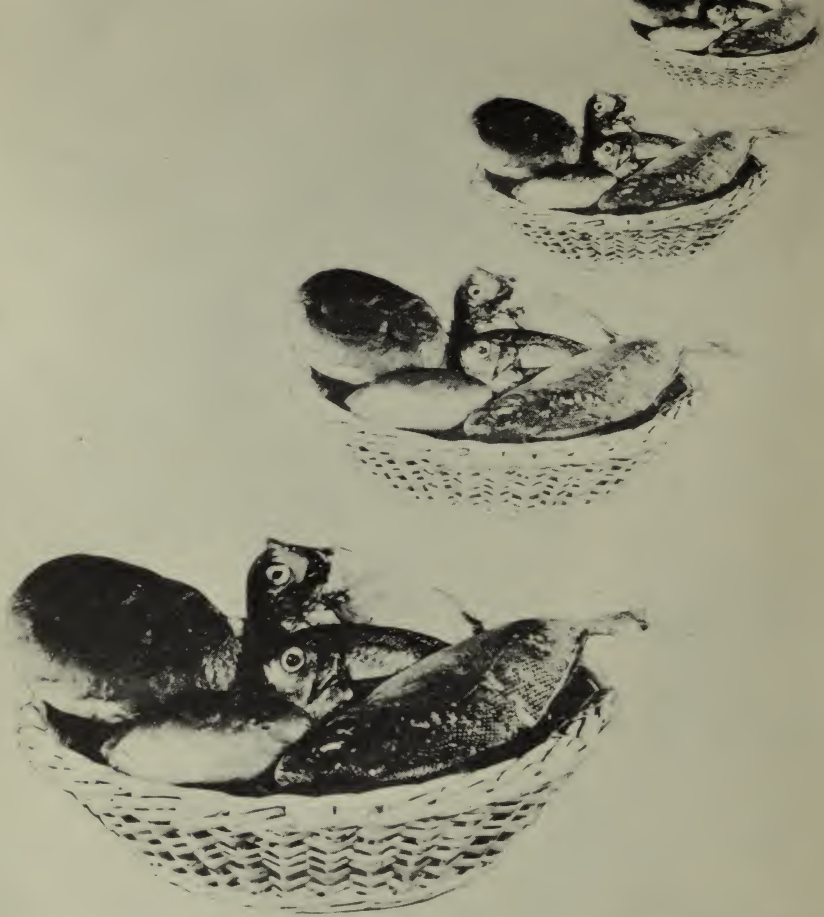
David the prophet sang of Christ, "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." Melchisedech was King of Salem. His name meant King of Justice. Salem means Peace. He was like Christ because he offered bread and wine. Christ is the King of Justice and Peace: He changes bread and wine into His Body and Blood.



The Paschal Lamb also foreshadowed Christ's Sacrifice. During their Egyptian slavery, God ordered each Israelite family to sacrifice a lamb. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the family doorpost and the meat was eaten. These families were spared when the angel later killed the first-born of every Egyptian family. Like the lamb, Christ was killed for all mankind. His Blood was sprinkled to save us from hell. At the Communion of the Mass, the priest holds the Body of Christ and says, "Behold the Lamb of God."



Four hundred and fifty years before Christ was born, the prophet Malachy told the Chosen People that God was no longer pleased with their sacrifice. Then he said, "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My Name is great among the gentiles. **AND IN EVERY PLACE** there is a sacrifice and this is offered to My Name, a clean oblation, for My Name is great among the gentiles." **HE WAS FORETELLING** the Sacrifice of the Mass, offered all over the world.



When Christ came, He multiplied loaves and fishes to feed thousands. By this miracle, Our Lord showed that He had power over all created things. This was also a sign of what Christ would later do—give His own Body and Blood as spiritual food to everyone who would take it.



Some of the people belittled the multiplication of loaves and fishes. They said this miracle was not as great as the manna which had come from heaven to feed their forefathers in the desert. But Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna and died . . . I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eat **THIS** bread, he shall live forever. And the bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world."



These people said, "How can this man give us His Flesh to eat?" And Jesus said, "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day. For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink."

These words were a straight prediction of what Christ meant to do. Some disciples refused to believe He would give them His Flesh and Blood to eat and drink, and they turned away from Him.



On the night before He died, Jesus gathered with the apostles to eat the Last Supper with them. He washed their feet, saying, "If I have washed your feet, you in turn ought to wash each other's feet. I have been setting you an example. Do for others what I have done for you."

This is My Body.



“And having taken bread, He gave thanks and broke, and gave to them, saying, ‘This is My Body, which is being given for you: do this in remembrance of Me.’” Christ did two things here. He celebrated the first Mass, and ordained the first priests.

This is My Blood.



“And taking a cup, He gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, ‘All of you drink of this: for this is My Blood of the new covenant which is being shed for many unto the remission of sins.’” Covenant means an agreement. God made two agreements with men—the Old Testament, and the New Testament. Both were for sacrifice to Him. Christ made the first unbloody sacrifice of the New Testament at the Last Supper.



The next day, Christ died on the Cross. This was the Bloody Sacrifice of the New Testament. But it was the same Sacrifice as the one He made the night before at the Last Supper. By this Sacrifice, Christ fulfilled all the prophecies and perfected all the figures and types of Him through the centuries.



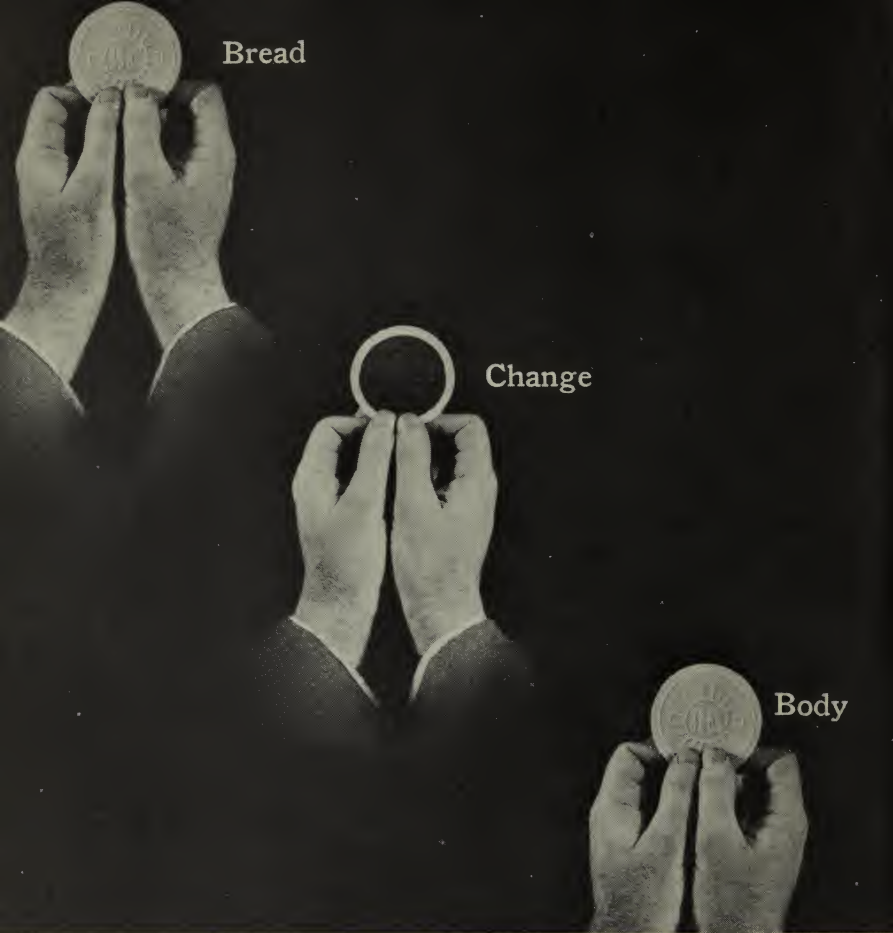
The Mass, first offered at the Last Supper, and the Sacrifice of the Cross are one and the same sacrifice. This is because both have the same priest, Jesus Christ. All priests today have their priesthood only in Christ —He renews the Sacrifice through them each time.



Also, the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Cross are the same because they have the same victim. In the Holy Mass and on the Cross, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ are offered.



The one difference between the Sacrifice of the Cross and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the manner of the Sacrifice. On the Cross, Christ shed His Blood. In the Mass, He offers an Unbloody Sacrifice. Yet, both acts are the same Sacrifice because they have the same priest and the same victim.



When the priest says the words of Consecration, he takes a piece of bread and a chalice of wine. Over the bread he says, "This is My Body." Over the wine, "This is My Blood." Instantly, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Our Lord has spoken and acted through his priest. Yet, the Body LOOKS like bread, and the Blood LOOKS like wine, because Christ keeps the appearances of bread and wine while He changes the substance into Himself.



Each Sacrament is a sign which can be seen or heard. The sign is made up of “matter” (or material), which in Holy Eucharist is bread and wine, and “form”, which is the words, “This is My Body”, “This is My Blood.” Ordinary bread can be used, but the Church prescribes unleavened bread.



Since Christ used unleavened bread at the Last Supper, the Church uses unleavened bread also. This is plain flour, mixed with water and baked. The Sisters make large sheets of unleavened bread and cut the small wafers from them.



The wine must be pure, and made from grapes. It must not be sour, or have any artificial color or other matter in it.



The liquid matter of the Holy Eucharist is wine mixed with a few drops of water. Just as water and blood flowed from Christ on Calvary, so we have the Blood and Water of Christ in the Mass. It also symbolizes the union of Jesus Christ with His Mystical Body, the Church.



Christ, the principal priest of the Sacrifice of the Mass, wished to continue His Sacrifice for all time. He ordered His Apostles to carry it on when He said, "Do this for a commemoration of Me." These Apostles, who were the first bishops, have handed down this power through their successors till today.



Persons other than priests can give out Holy Communion. This is called the “administration” of the Sacrament. A deacon, by the right of his Holy Orders, can give Holy Communion. And in extreme cases, as in times of persecution, in order to save the Blessed Sacrament from abuse, lay people may carry and distribute it.



There are four reasons or purposes for a sacrifice. They are Adoration, Thanksgiving, Reparation and Petition. In Old Testament times, God commanded a sacrifice for each of these purposes. The Holy Mass includes all of them. Reparation is fulfilled at the beginning of Mass in the Confiteor, an Act of Contrition for sin.



"Glory to God in the highest" prays the priest. All through the Mass, God is adored. The Gloria is a prayer of adoration in the early part of the Mass. "We praise Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory," prays the priest.



The Mass teaches us many things about God. We are continually **GOING** to God with words of praise and love. He is **COMING** to us with words of love and guidance. At the Epistle we learn about God through His sacred writings.



At the Gospel, the priest reads aloud the very words of Christ. Our Lord is teaching us just as He taught the Apostles, with parables, with stories, with words of great love. At the end of the Gospel the priest kisses the book and says, "By the words of the Gospel, may our sins be blotted out."



At the Offertory, the priest offers man's gift, bread and wine, to God. God accepts the gift which will be ennobled by the act of Christ changing it into His own Body and Blood. "Receive, O Holy Father," the priest prays, "almighty and eternal God, this spotless host, which I, Thy unworthy servant, do offer to Thee, my living and true God, for my own countless sins and neglects, and for all here present. . . ."



The priest prays to God for the Church, the Pope and the Bishop, for all whom he wishes God to help, and for all present at the Mass. Then Christ, using the priest as His instrument, changes the bread and wine into His Body and Blood.



The priest fulfills the purpose of Sacrifice called "petition" when, after the Consecration, he begs God to accept the Sacrifice, to be merciful to the dead, to help the living. And in the "Our Father" (Pater Noster) he prays the prayer of petition that Christ taught the Apostles.



A "change" or destruction is necessary in a sacrifice. On Calvary the change came when Christ died. In the Mass it comes at the Consecration, during the time when the bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Yet, another symbol of destruction is used at the breaking of the Host. It is broken into three parts.



Christ, Our Paschal Lamb, is sacrificed. The priest bows low and says the prayer the Centurion said that so moved Christ to admiration, "O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof." When he receives Our Lord, he says, "May the Body (Blood) of Our Lord Jesus Christ keep my soul unto life everlasting." Holy Communion unites man with God in a unison of love.



After the people have received Holy Communion, the priest thanks God for His goodness and His mercy. In so doing, he completes another element of the sacrifice, "thanksgiving." Then he turns to the people, gives them God's blessing and bids them to depart.



Catholics should receive Our Blessed Lord whenever they attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The first condition necessary for us to receive Communion is that we be free from mortal sin. If we receive Jesus often, it is good to go to Confession once a week. It is not absolutely necessary, however, unless we are in mortal sin.



The second thing necessary for worthy reception of Holy Communion is observance of the fast. A person must be without food or drink from midnight. There are various ways of measuring time, as for instance, SUN time, STANDARD time, DAYLIGHT time. We may observe our fast with any standard of time in legitimate use.



In times when it is hard to keep the rule of fasting, the Church allows changes. For instance, when afternoon Masses are said for soldiers, the fasting law is changed to four hours before Holy Communion. There are other regulations to take care of various emergencies.



Church Law **COMMANDS** us under pain of sin to go to Holy Communion at least once a year during the Easter time. This is called Easter duty. As already mentioned, the usual way to receive Our Lord is at Mass.



Those who are ill for a month or more may receive Holy Communion occasionally without fasting from midnight. When a person is in danger of death, he is obliged to receive Holy Communion if possible. This is called Viaticum which means, "that Our Lord will go on the way with you" from earth to heaven. Fasting is not necessary in this case.



Every home should have the necessary articles for a sick call. A table is covered with a clean cloth, two candles, a crucifix, small napkin or towel, a glass of plain water, and a spoon. The priest should be called to the bedside while the sick person is able to understand him, and know what is happening.



Our own thanksgiving should be an important part of Communion. We should thank our Lord for His great goodness in coming to us. Speak to Him. Tell Him you love Him. Ask Him for favors for yourself and your loved ones. Remember, He is God and you are alone with Him.



If someone who knows he is in the state of mortal sin receives Our Lord, he commits a great sin. This is called a sacrilege. He should confess this sin as soon as possible. We should make acts of love and repentance to Our Lord when we receive Him to atone for the sacrileges committed against Him.



Christ in the Holy Eucharist is the source of all Grace and the center of spiritual life. All the other Sacraments are related to it. Baptism, Confirmation, and Penance prepare us for it. Holy Orders gives us the grace and vocation to administer it. It lifts Matrimony to a divine level, strengthens it, and blesses it. In our last hours we are prepared for Christ by Extreme Unction.



Jesus is present in the tabernacle day and night. He will be on earth till the end of time. Holy Eucharist is the central Sacrament because it is the living Person of Christ. We should go into Church often and visit Him, thank Him for the great Gift of His own Divine Presence. If we do, Our Lord will bless us and give us His love.